

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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MEMORIAL DAY

Virus killed 36 at Aurora nursing home



James P. McCoy/Buffalo News

Rosanna Bello of Cheektowaga puts flowers on the grave of her father, who was a World War II veteran, Sunday at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Cheektowaga. Today is set aside to remember those who died in the service of the country.

Rescue bill snagged by debate over liability suits

By JERRY ZREMSKI

NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

WASHINGTON – Businesspeople in Buffalo and beyond fear that the nation's economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis could be derailed by something as American as apple pie: lawsuits.

And that fear has produced a stalemate in Congress over a fourth major Covid-19 rescue package, this one aimed at bailing out states and localities – like New York and Buffalo – that are falling deep into the red.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, insists that Congress focus on liability reform in hopes of avoiding “a lawsuit pandemic.”

Democrats disagree, saying Republicans want to give a break to businesses that leave their customers or workers exposed to the coronavirus.

See **Lawsuits** on Page A7

Some thoughts about rebuilding the economy

• Gov. Andrew Cuomo says when it comes to re-energizing the economy, the watch words are: ‘Think Big.’ *Page A8*

• **Entertainment washout:** Plays, concerts and music tours all appear to have been washed away this year by the Covid-19 pandemic. *Page A5*

On Memorial Day, remembering a close call at end of World War II

Patricia Brumley is head cook at Tonawanda High School. In that role, she oversees the creation of such favorites as lunchtime nachos and “tacos in a bag,” meals she said the kids especially love, making her emblematic of a group of school employees many of us never forget.

Some of the most memorable figures at a high school – at least high school as we knew it before the Covid-19 pandemic – are the women and men who prepare lunch, the ones who greet you every day as you work your way through line. That leaves Brumley, 62, to contemplate a truth she increasingly appreciates as she grows older, a reality she honors with gratitude and sadness on Memorial Day.

If events on a summer evening in 1945 had changed in even a few slight ways, the head cook would be someone else, because Pat Brumley would probably never have been born.



Sean Kirst

COMMENTARY

She is the daughter of the late John A. and Mary Clark. Both her parents and her two siblings are gone, leaving Brumley to bear witness to the full impact of this anniversary:

World War II ended 75 years ago this summer. Military historian and author Stephen Harding says a flight by a B-32 Dominator from Okinawa to Tokyo on Aug. 28, 1945 – part of a formation on a photographic mission to provide information for American troops – was probably the final operational mission of the war.

A ceasefire between Japan and the Allies had gone into effect almost two weeks earlier, after the Americans dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A formal surrender would not be signed until September, and some earlier flights from Okinawa to do similar photographic

See **Kirst** on Page A12

Pandemic has had deadliest effect in Democratic areas

By JENNIFER MEDINA
AND ROBERT GEBELOFF

NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON – The staggering American death toll from the coronavirus, now approaching 100,000, has touched every part of the country, but the losses have been especially acute along its coasts, in its major cities, across the industrial Midwest, and in New York City.

The devastation, in other words, has been disproportionately felt in blue America, which helps explain why people on opposing sides of a partisan divide that has intensified in the past two decades are thinking about the virus differently. It is not just that Demo-



New York Times

Workers wait for customers at a San Antonio gift shop the day Texas lifted its stay-at-home order.

crats and Republicans disagree on how to re-open businesses, schools and the country as a whole. Beyond perception, beyond ideology, there are starkly different realities for red and blue America right now.

Democrats are far more likely to live in counties where the virus has ravaged the community, while Republicans are more likely to live in counties that have been relatively unscathed by the illness, though they are paying an economic price. Counties won by President Trump in 2016 have reported just 27% of the virus infections and 21% of the deaths – even though 45% of Americans live in these communities, a New York Times analysis has

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2nd-largest facility in area appears to have most fatalities

By LOU MICHEL

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Erie County's second-largest nursing home has had 36 Covid-19 deaths, which appears to be the most of any individual nursing home in Western New York.

The deaths of 36 residents at Absolut Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation at Aurora Park have been attributed to the virus, with the majority of those deaths occurring inside the East Aurora nursing home, according to RCA Healthcare Management LLC, which operates the facility.

The state Health Department's most recent list of coronavirus fatalities, as of Friday, shows 30 deaths at Absolut at Aurora Park.

The difference is the result of a lag between the time the state Health Department receives the latest numbers and when the state posts those figures on its public list, RCA Healthcare officials said.

Through Friday, the Health Department listed 251 confirmed and presumed coronavirus deaths occurring at nursing homes in Erie and Niagara counties.

RCA Healthcare officials pointed out that Absolut at Aurora Park, with 320 beds, is the second-largest nursing home in Western New York.

“As such, a raw number of deaths is misleading as a comparison point to other buildings, and a percentage would be a much more telling metric,” RCA Healthcare spokesman Jason Newman said.

The largest nursing home in the region, Terrace View, a 390-bed facility on the Erie County Medical Center campus in Buffalo, has reported no deaths. HighPointe on Michigan, the third-largest nursing home, also has had no deaths, according to

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Covid-19 in WNY*

Number of confirmed cases	Number of deaths
7,179	584

Cases by county

• Erie County	5,544
• Niagara	1,000
• Orleans	200
• Genesee	179
• Wyoming	76
• Chautauqua	74
• Cattaraugus	62
• Allegany	44

* Updated on Sunday

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WEATHER

Very warm, partly sunny. High 82, low 68. Details on Page B8



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